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SOVIET-BLOC NAVAL AND SHIPBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN THE BALTIC

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Bakom has important shipyards. New ships are built there, and the shipyards make large-scale reparations deliveries and provide maintenance for Soviet naval forces. Construction has been begun on new dock installations for the Soviets here, as well as at the Boddenwerft shipyards in Damgarten and Peenewerft yards in Wolgast. Existing shipyards are being expanded. Their entire production is being devoted to ships for the armed forces. Although all new ships, which will go almost without exception to the USSR as combat ships, are classified as fishing cutters and trawlers, there are also some destroyers among them. Most of the hulls are built some distance inland, for example in Boitzenburg, Brandenburg, or Berlin; from there, they are towed to the Wismar, Stralsund, or Greifswald shipyards for installation of equipment.

The people-owned Wismar shipyards are building ships of the Narvik class. The Wismar yards and the Karl Liebknecht shipyards in Warnemuende are now constructing 600-ton torpedo boats and submarine types XXI and XXVIII (apparently very similar to 2,000-ton Walter submarines, the designs for which fell into Soviet hands). The Vulkan Shipyards in Szczecin produce four submarines a month. These are powered by six and eight-cylinder diesel engines, built by Junker in Dessau and by Schaeffer and Budenberg in Magdeburg.

Considerable work is also being done on reparations orders and on the reconstruction of ships. The Neptun shipyards in Rostock already have rebuilt a cruiser and the minelayer Marti. The Kraft-durch-Freude (Strength Through Joy) ship Der Deutsche, has been transformed at Warnemuende into the troop transport Asia. The Cordillera, the Oceana, and the Hansa also are to be rebuilt.

The shipbuilding program is being carried out by 35 shipyards with a combined total of 45,000 workers. The Neptun shipyards, largest of the 35, employ 12,000 persons. The Vulkan shipyards in Szczecin employ 5,000 workers, and the Karl Liebknecht shipyards 4,000.

Despite its scope, this shipbuilding program should not be overrated. The East German shipbuilding industry is dependent in large measure on steel supplies from West Germany, because the steel produced in East Germany is of inferior quality and unfit for use in shipbuilding. The West German steel embargo, however, has caused a noticeable decrease in production and partial work stoppage in the East German shipbuilding industry.

The East German government has vainly attempted to obtain from Soviet occupation authorities, a few new ships, for the German fishing fleets. All the ships at present flying the GDR flag were built prior to 1945, and need to be overhauled or replaced.

It became known in 1949 that the Soviets intended to create a Volksmarine (People's Navy). The Volkspolizei, (People's Police) had already developed into a military type of organization, and arrangements had been made to supply it with air power. The press carried pictures of President Pieck reviewing a naval guard of honor, and it was simultaneously announced that the Soviet Fleet had placed a significant number of warships ^{sic} at this disposal of the new Volksmarine. Mention was made of six destroyers, two torpedo boats of the Novajur class, 12 motor torpedo boats, and 14 Walter submarines. The ships were reported as being on loan but were to become the property of the Volksmarine once it was organized. Subsequent additions included six submarines, three motor torpedo boats, and 12 war-fishing cutters ^{sic}.

The first cadet groups were moved into the old naval barracks in Daenholm/Stralsund at the beginning of December 1949. Police Commissar Gustav Schueler served as their chief. Thereafter, Volksmarine garrisons were set up in Wismar, Rostock, Sassnitz, Jaz, Bergen, Greifswald, Anklam, and Neuwarp.

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It has been known for some time that the Soviets are recruiting German naval personnel for the Soviet Fleet. These men have undergone refresher training in Gdynia. GDR labor offices have been ordered to re-register all former German naval personnel, naval guard units, and naval Hitler Youth who have had active service. At the end of June 1950 it was announced that the Soviet Commandatura was continuing to recruit German naval officers, especially submarine officers, for the Soviet Fleet. Apparently these training activities have nothing to do with the Volksmarine except that they are probably intended as preliminary training for Soviet Fleet replacement personnel, a certain percentage of whom will later be assigned to East German naval units.

On 1 June 1950, the GDR Council of Ministers decided to establish a Main Administration for Seepolizei (Sea Police). The Main Administration is located in Berlin-Wilhelmsruh, and the Central Administration and Commandatura are in Berlin-Oberschoenebeide. Waldemar Ferner is the Inspector-General for the Seepolizei. The home operations base is Wolgast, where the central maintenance installations, including the Materiel Administration, munitions depots, supply depots, and clothing and food depots are also located.

Laender units are in the process of being organized into fleet units in Wolgast and in Kuehlungsborn (Mecklenburg), and a training unit for naval officers with a capacity of 1,000 officer candidates is being set up in Parow ^[Karow?], (Mecklenburg). The total strength of the Seepolizei was only 2,448 men as of 29 May 1951, but it is to be increased to 10,000 men by the end of 1951. Judging from the number of ships available at present, this total would appear to apply only to personnel for the seagoing units.

In June 1951, 13 mine sweepers were on duty in Wolgast. These were designated as a flotilla. They are reported to have been built by the Stralsund People-Owned Shipyards. They are powered by six-cylinder diesel engines. At present, the ships are armed only with machine guns, but cannon mounts have been installed on the decks. The Clothing Administration in Wolgast carries a supply of cannon. These could be installed at the shipyards in Wolgast within a matter of hours. It is reported, too, that there are a number of smaller motor torpedo boats in service, built by the people-owned Claus Engelbrecht Shipyards in Berlin-Koepenick, which produce one boat a month. The chief of the torpedo boat unit is Seepolizei Commissar Kross.

A number of new ships are under construction. Most of these are located inland at present. The antiaircraft gunboats Fuerstenberg and Prenzlau will weigh 1,200 tons each and are being armed with two 75-millimeter antiaircraft guns and two 20-millimeter automatic guns. Work on five mine layers and a medium-sized gunboat has had to be suspended because of a lack of materials. A 2,000-ton fishing vessel is on order. The ship is to be equipped with three 88-millimeter guns and various automatic weapons, and will have a power unit consisting of six 920-horsepower diesel engines. The plans prove that the GDR Seepolizei is to serve as a basis for an actual war fleet.

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